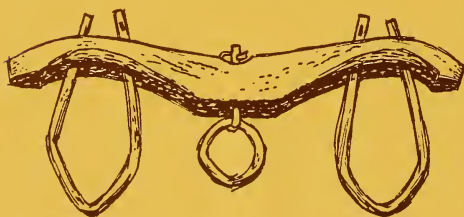


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James, H. H.  
Address on Abraham Lincoln

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**ADDRESS ON**  
**ABRAHAM LINCOLN**

by

**MR. G. R. JAMES**

**General Attorney of the Erie Railroad**

**at Monthly Meeting**

**General Eastern Passenger Agents Association**

**of New York**

**on February 7th, 1935**

**Hotel Ambassador, New York**



## ADDRESS ON ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Ordinary human qualities, possessed in superhuman quantities, made Abraham Lincoln the most unique character in the history of statesmanship.

In the fall of an apple from a tree, Newton beheld the law of the universe; in the sprouting of a seed Spencer saw evolution; in the heart of man Shakespeare saw a picture of the world; in taxation without representation Thomas Jefferson saw a revolutionary crime; in penalizing men for their religious beliefs Daniel O'Connell saw the throttling of manhood; in the denial of freedom of worship, Charles Carroll of Carrollton saw the refusal of a God-given right; in the color of a man's skin, Abraham Lincoln saw no excuse for one man making a slave of another.

In tears, Abraham Lincoln saw the pathos of life; in smiles he saw the philosophy of a story or the lesson of a joke. He was "the touch of nature which makes the world kin." Abraham Lincoln was a mixture of sadness and of joy. Of wit and of wisdom, of comedy and of tragedy. In him Socrates and Democritus, Aeson and Marcus Aurelius were made one.

Men of greater intellectual brilliancy may have scintillated across history's page, but as a combination of head and heart, Abraham Lincoln stands beyond comparison. Brain power alone never ruled the world. In the average man there is more heart than head; just as in great men generally there is more head than heart. But to this rule Abraham Lincoln is the grand exception. His head never strangled his heart. This is why humanity finds in Abraham Lincoln a picture of itself; this is why humanity loves Abraham Lincoln for humanity's virtues and humanity's faults.

Abraham Lincoln came from the plain people, understood the plain people and the plain people understood him. He stands as an everlasting refutation of the divine rights of kings. He proclaims that the way to reach an eternity of fame is to hitch your wagon to a star. He shows that greatness does not exist in spasmodic effort, but in perpetual endeavor to perform the work that lies next to a man's hand. All his career drives home the fact, that of all laws, the great law is to do unto others as you would have others do unto you. This law is the keynote of Lincoln's character and the source of his strong humanity. A thousand pleasant incidents in his career emphasize this humanity and make us love him, not as a demi-God but as a red-blooded man who knew poverty and pitied it, who knew weakness and sorrowed for it, who knew toil and respected it, who craved liberty and would die for it, who revered law and would live by it.

The story of his love for the unfortunate Ann Rutledge; his manly conduct toward Mary Owen; his cherishment of Mary Todd, the girl he married, form a lovely chapter in the pages of Romance. Edgar Allan Poe makes the heart beat in sorrow as he sings of the lost Leonore. The note of sadness running thru Lincoln's life seems a dirge for the lost Ann Rutledge, the love of his youth, whom death snatched while youth bloomed. I know no more pathetic picture than Abraham Lincoln spreading his coat over the grave of Ann Rutledge to keep the rain from reaching her. Father Ryan wrote a beautiful poem on "Their Lives Runneth Thus." It yet remains for some

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poet to embalm in the eternal amber of rhyme the romance of Ann Rutledge and Abraham Lincoln. I mention this because I take as my theme the humane aspect of Abraham Lincoln. His political career, his public deeds are known by all men and to repeat them here would be superfluous.

Abraham Lincoln loved life. Like Ovid's true man, he kept his head among the stars but his feet were on the earth. His physical strength was marvelous. He could out-run and out-wrestle any boy in his neighborhood. He liked a horse-race and loved a cock fight, but he never smoked, never chewed and never drank. His sense of humor was unrivaled. He is the sole man in our history whose reputation as a story-teller did not prove an obstacle to political preferment.

Abraham Lincoln has set the world an example of filial piety. He idolized his mother, Nancy Hanks, and said that all he was owed to her. In her dying hours no doctor was near. Little Abe and his sister Sarah, were nurse and doctor. They smoothed her pillow, soothed her spirit and closed her eyes in death. When dying, she said, "Be good to each other." Little Abe never forgot his mother's injunction.

Like Daniel Webster, Lincoln was not an omniverous reader; but what he read he made his own. Other men may have read more widely but none thought more deeply than Abraham Lincoln. The Bible was his favorite book. He recited its maxims by heart and on its teachings molded his conduct and his thought.

The world has long wondered but has seldom inquired where Abraham Lincoln got his education. He would split rails by day and study books by night; but this does not explain his wonderful knowledge or marvelous power of speech.

Abraham Lincoln was a graduate of the University of Nature. He found "sermons in stones, books in running brooks, and good in everything." So did Shakespeare.

The untutored Shakespeare wrote the greatest of plays; and the untutored Lincoln wrote the greatest of orations.

Victor Hugo has been hailed as the master of the terse style. But in hammering a world of thoughts into a few words, Abraham Lincoln was Victor Hugo's superior.

Dickens could make the tears come by his magic words, but nothing in Dickens can match the pathetic note of Lincoln's letter to the Mother who had lost three sons on the field of battle.

His enemies called Lincoln a hard-headed man. He early gave proof of hard headedness. One day while a lad he was driving a mule. With a careless, "Get up you old hussy," he applied a whip to the mule's back. In the middle of this exclamation the mule kicked him in the head. Young Abe lay unconscious all night, when he came to he finished the sentence which

the mule's kick had interrupted by exclaiming "You old hussy!" Yes, Lincoln was a hard-headed man. A kicking mule could make no impression on his skull and could not knock out of his head what he had in it.

Sad himself, he wanted everybody else happy, and he remarked, "When I die, I want it said of me that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower when I thought a flower would grow."

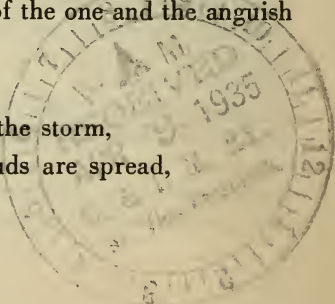
His mind acted slowly, but as accurately as the logic of mathematics. He saw things thru a perfect mental lens. He was so truthful he never deceived himself. He was as shrewd as he was honest. He was militant but never insolent. He commanded by suggestion, and ruled thru love. Indifferent as to non-essentials, he was unmovable as to principles. Fixed as the polar star, he said: "I have never turned an inch out of my way to gain a favor." A slave girl whom he saw auctioned off in New Orleans planted in his breast the seed of the Emancipation Proclamation. As her new master led the girl away, Lincoln exclaimed to his companions, "Boys if I ever get a chance to hit slavery, by God, I'll hit it hard."

A friend of labor to the commandment "Thou shalt not steal," Abraham Lincoln added "Neither shalt thou steal the product of labor, nor shalt thou steal labor itself."

Abraham Lincoln "lived as he did and died as he did, because he was what he was." He carried thru life the shield of a clean conscience, and the sword of a clear brain. He was broad; he was liberal; he was radical. Disraeli was first a Liberal and then a Conservative; Gladstone was first a Conservative and then a Liberal, but Abraham Lincoln was never a weathercock in politics. He was always the same. He was not a Republican, not a Democrat. He was a humanitarian and humanitarianism was his politics.

Abraham Lincoln delivered the man from a bondage, one hour of which according to Thomas Jefferson, was more than ages of oppression which the Colonial fathers rose in rebellion to oppose in 1776. Abraham Lincoln vindicated Republican institutions as no other man ever vindicated them. His father caught the fish, shot the game, and raised the vegetables that fed the family and he made the cradle in which little Abe slept—his mother patched her own quilts, spun her own garments and made little Abe's swaddling clothes—and yet this son of poverty climbed a mountain peak, whereon no scion of kings will ever set foot. Sacrifice greeted his entrance into the world, sacrifice walked all life's journey at his side, sacrifice for liberty and sacrifice for the life of a nation closed his eyes in death. Lee surrendered on Palm Sunday—and Lincoln was shot on Good Friday. The Hosannas and the Dies Irae were not far apart. In the glory of the one and the anguish of the other—Lincoln stands out like—

Some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,  
Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm,  
Though round its breasts the rolling clouds are spread,  
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.









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